



CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

eISSN: 2660-6828 | Volume: 03 Issue: 07 Jul 2022
<https://cajipc.centralasianstudies.org>

Portrayal of Women in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal and Shobha De: A Comparative Study

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Received 24th May 2022, Accepted 18th Jun 2022, Online 31st July 2022

ANNOTATION

Feminism, Self-realization, Indian women, New Woman Indian Literature in English has journeyed a long way to achieve its present glory and grandeur. At present a number of women writers through their writings offer penetrative insight into the complex issues of life. The fictional concerns of these women writers analyze the world of women, their sufferings as victims of male hegemony; they also express social, economic and political upheavals in Indian society. Among these women writers Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal has earned a separate space for their particular attention towards psychological insight and existential concerns. These new generation of writers talked about the self-realization of women. The high class, educated, sensible women became protagonist in their novels. Their women were new class of women whose lives were not infested by problems of dowry or poverty. These Indian women lived a blessed life as far as material standards are concerned, but there was something wanting, some vacuum in their lives. These women were facing the problem of identity. They show concern about basic human problems and to them woman is a mother, a wife, a daughter, a housewife, a working woman and above all she is a woman. Their women are the victims of a male-dominated society. In their novels men are not always sinners or oppressors. They explore the identity of the oppressor and show a holistic approach to the problems of women through their novels. They have raised woman's issues and strove to reach to their solutions as well.

KEYWORDS: feminism, portrayal, woman, novels, Nayantara Sahgal, Shobha De, comparative, study, literature.

Introduction

An attempt has been made through this paper about the status of Indian women in the writings of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal in which they represent new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man's equal and honored partner. Their women characters undoubtedly reveal their feminist ideology. The paper seeks to provide a comparative study of the image of woman in the novels of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal. Shobha De graduated from St. Xavier's College Mumbai, has been: a super model, celebrity journalist, magazine editor, columnist, wife, mother, social commentator and T.V. scriptwriter. She projects the image of the upper-class woman in contemporary India. She has an extraordinary ability to discuss the very sensitive aspects of human relationship in general

and man-woman relationship in particular. She believes in a very frank narration of incidents and openheartedness. Nothing is reserved in her fiction. It is in this respect Shobha De differs considerably from other Indian Women Novelists in English. In her novels more emphasis is on the image of woman. It is revealed in the form of her critical comments on the new emerging woman of modern cosmopolitan India. She portrays a variety of women from the traditional, subjugated and marginalized to the extremely modern and liberated women. She explored the lives of bored housewives and their loveless rich husbands and family. Her novels mirror the life styles of the elite and the middle classes of urban world. Her style of discussing woman's issue in her novels is quite challenging and untraditional. Women in her novels are represented as sexually liberated and free thinkers who have been termed as 'New Woman'. These so called new women are much more physically active and athletically strong than their mothers. Feminist New Style, a journal (1927) declared that "The new woman is a blend of physical freedom, sexuality and stamina with feminist self-assertiveness and traditional domestic femininity, a woman who can combine pleasure, career and marriage.

They are eager to participate in pleasure as they would do in play, work etc." All her women are rebellious modern Indian women who challenge the orthodoxy of social taboos. They are different from the sexually ignorant Indian women, who feel that sex is as unpleasant subjection to man's desire necessary in order to have offspring.[1] Her women challenge this traditional set up in the society. They are more assertive, domineering and bold in comparison to men. They are not submissive and guilty of their affairs. The women in Shobha De's novels rebuild their lost fortunes; make all efforts to look glamorous by losing weight and spending money in massage parlours. They try to look and act differently from the conventional and traditional women. They love to fall in love with their looks by which they try to attract people. It gives them immense pleasure when people fall head to heels in love with them and they are least concerned about it.

Shobha De does not believe in describing her women characters as love slaves or mere help mates at home, as a writer she tries to mirror her feminist mindset while portraying women in her novels. A broader evaluation of her work reveals her protest against the good old image of woman who can't live the way she wants to and do things the way she wants to. The portrayal of the image of subjugated and marginalized women in Shobha De's novels: *Socialite Evenings* (1989), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Starry Nights* (1992), *Sisters* (1992), have been studied with an emphasis on men's pride, incompatible marriages, traditional norms of behavior and patriarchal social system as the real forces of the oppression and exploitation of women. Her novels are a slice of urban life and presents an intimate side of urban woman's life, also reveals her plight in the present day society. She draws our attention to women's exploitation, discrimination and emancipation. They are treated with double standard and are never regarded as autonomous beings. In *Socialite Evenings* (1989), Karuna, the protagonist of the novel is the perfect example of the misery of women in India. She suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband. [2] Her husband treats her as a mere object subjected to his will as a result there is a complete loss of her identity. The journey of Karuna is a journey from a middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman. Her entry in the glamorous world of modeling and friendship with Bunty are the acts of rebellion. After marriage she establishes extra-marital relationship with Krish, revolts against her insensitive husband and finally divorces him. She also rejects the ideas of her second marriage. Similarly, Anjali, a young socialite, also suffers much because of her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. Here, Shobha De's attack is not against the individuals, it is against the system that favours men and causes women's subjugation and marginalization. In *Starry Nights* (1992), Shobha De has projected the shattering of human values in this glittering world of Mumbai cinema through the realistic portrayal of Aasha Rani, Geeta Devi, Malini and Rita. In our society, women ill-treat and exploit women instead of showing love, respect and understanding for their own sex. As a matter of fact, Shobha De brings

out the the universal psychological truth that the woman is the enemy of woman. The women in this novel are related to the world of films. Aasha Rani, 'sweetheart of the millions', breaks all social mores and social norms by her unusual and deviant behavior. Nothing controls her desire to live a life of her own. Her sexual encounters with different men point out her sexual aggression. She defeats men at their own game, and demolishes the mythical image of woman imposed by patriarchy. According to De, 'sex is the bedrock of all relationships'. Her women in this novel frankly discuss and practice sex. They are bold and rebellious who protect against their exploitation and strive to assert their identity. However women in Shobha De's are broad minded enough to continue with their flings and affairs without bothering about the matrimonial alliance of their partners. These women are confident and are reasonable enough to justify their relationship. This relationship is best exhibited in the relationship between Asha Rani and Akshay Arora in *Starry Nights*. The concept of morality arising out of love for one and the same person is out-dated. This is well illustrated by Shobha De's *Sisters* (1992). In this novel Mikki Hiralal is oppressed, subjugated and exploited by Binny Malhotra, a true representative of patriarchal system. The protagonist Mikki in her journey from a silent sufferer to a hard rebel breaks all the age-old moral codes of the male-dominated world. She does not appear emotional or sentimental even on the death of her parents like the traditional Indian woman. Both Mikki and Alisha, (another character) are not weak ladies of manners. After Mikki got the sexual satisfaction from her husband before marriage, she immediately got married to him without giving second thoughts to her decision. [3]

The modern Indian woman who is at the centre of Shobha De's novels is not passive in nature. She protests strongly against the forces in male-dominated world, which threaten her individuality. Alisha expresses the novelist's desire of liberation for women in sexual matters. Next, a middle-class working woman Taarini asserts her love for Shashi, despite her husband and children. Shobha De's women break all sorts of taboos and feel liberated. The novel *Second Thoughts* (1996) is a sad tale of Maya, an oppressed wife. She suffers from marital disharmony because her husband Ranjan considers woman as a mere object. Though an engineer, Maya is not allowed to take up even a part time job. Instead her husband again and again reminds her of 'tradition'. It is due to Ranjan's traditional attitude and feeling of superiority, Maya feels herself trapped in a neglected and meaningless life. He never tried to find out the reason behind Maya's gloominess. He was under the assumption that providing four square meals was more than enough for her and she ought to be grateful for what he was doing for her. Even when Maya advances to him in bed, he snubbed by saying that he needed time for it. The entry of Nikhil brought a new meaning to Maya's life. He was fourth floor neighbor and was a college going student. He may not be interested in studies but he had mastered the art of captivating women.

Maya could immediately feel the difference Nikhil brought to her life. Nikhil filled Maya with the power and pleasure that she was so much desperate about. She had found meaning in her existence in this world. Sometimes Shobha De has been charged of commercializing women while expressing sex in a much elaborated detail. After reading her novels one feels that she has tried to fight for the cause of women and has brought out the aspect of sex because she feels that women are marginalized in terms of sex. They are made slaves in the hands of their husbands by making them satisfy their demands whenever they need it. They get cruel and rude even in love making and get enjoyment out of it. Shobha De has portrayed men deriving pleasure by torturing a woman by beating their naked body with hunters or hurting them with making bruises and giving them pain. Therefore the novelist has portrayed her women in such a way that they are sexually liberated and use sex on their own terms.[4] As a staunch supporter and an ardent follower of feminism there is a bold and frank depiction of fair sex and feminine attitude in her works. Her novels are the protest novels against the male-dominated Indian society where women are denied the freedom of expression and action.

Shobha De's novels represent the new Indian woman's voice. A 'New Woman' is in search of self-identity, seeking liberation in all walks of life, replacing the traditional image of Indian woman. The need for women to seek their identity is the message in her novels. Nayantara Sahgal emerged as one of the most significant voices in the realm of Indian English fiction. Women who are conscious of their emotional needs and strive for self-fulfillment rejecting the existing traditions and social set-up and long for a more liberal and unconventional way of life finds their place in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Her novels portray women trampled and oppressed because of their dependence upon men and the harrowing experience they have to face in their struggle to come out of the bondage and stand on their own feet. The hardship and suffering involved in fighting against an established order, the shattering experience of divorce and the resultant alienation between parents and children form the thematic concern of Sahgal's novels. Sahgal's novels:

A Time to be Happy (1957), This Time of Morning (1965), The Day in Shadow (1971), Mistaken Identity (1988) portray the sensibility of woman, how a woman looks out at herself and her problems. She feels that woman should try to understand and realize herself as a human being and not just as an appendage to some male life. In her novels women represent different kinds of virtues. They do not suffer but maintain their position. The novels of Sahgal talk about women who are oppressed by marriage, by political circumstances, by accidents of history. Most of her women characters have extra-marital relationship with one or more than one person. Her women are victims of a conventional society which does not permit women to assert their rights pertaining to their individual freedom. Women who feel frustrated either because of marital disharmony or loneliness in life is shown to indulge in social or religious activities. In Sahgal's novel A Time to be Happy (1957), Maya is a woman who tries to submerge her unhappiness and dissatisfaction in social work and religion. Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships and the loneliness of living; hence most of her women remarry. Maya is a silent victim at the altar of marriage. Sahgal's women characters suffer because they refuse to submerge their individuality and cling to their personal identity at all costs. Maya suffers because she refuses to lose her identity. Sahgal shows her acute awareness of the dependent status of women in society. A Time to be Happy explores women's search for individuality both within marriage as equal partners and without it as individual. The women in This Time of Morning (1965) are more varied in their search for freedom and equality. [5] Uma and Leela, in their reckless search for freedom, use men as tools, but succeed only in harming themselves. Celia, Barbara and Nita, in their ultimate dependence on Kalyan betray the failure of their search for identity. In the character of Nita, Sahgal explores the place of a woman in Indian society before marriage. Nita is the young, beautiful daughter of Dr. Narang, who is a queer blend of Eastern and Western culture. Nita's parents want to settle down their daughter in marriage. They do not give any importance to the wishes of her daughter and force her to marry the man of their choice whom she neither loves nor admires. Finally, she agrees to her parents' choice of Vijay as groom. Though she is aware that Vijay views her as a possession not as an individual, and this kind of marriage has no prospects of fulfillment. Nita desires to live her own life and discover the needs of her body, rejecting the values and ideas of the previous generation thrust upon her. She offers herself to the irresistible Kalyan, the man of her choice.

Nita's pre-marital relationship with Kalyan is the result of an attempt to fulfill her inner desire for love and communication. When the time comes to decide about her marriage, her parents decide her future. Through the character of Nita, Sahgal shows the conventional narrow-minded Indian society, where life-partners are chosen by the parents. The Day in Shadow (1971) primarily deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. It centres on the traumatic post-divorce experience of a middle-aged woman, Simrit. Simrit's marriage to Som, an industrialist, turns out

to be disaster. The novel is basically concerned with the emotional effects of Simrit. The central preoccupation of the novel is the suffering caused to woman in the prison- house of love-less marriage and her suffering when she makes a breakway. When the story opens, Simrit and Som are divorced and she is trying to adjust to the aftermath of a divorce.

Implications

Sahgal deals how lack of proper companionship, communication and equality between man and woman cause wreck to marital relationship resulting in divorce. Simrit suffered from marital incompatibility. Simrit longs for self-expression and freedom to live as an individual within the bonds of marriage. She feels uprooted and abandoned in the male-dominated world as she finds that nobody tries to see divorce from her point of view, as a person seeking freedom and fulfillment. The novelist seems to be deeply concerned with the need of freedom for women. It is Simrit's longing for freedom and individuality that urges her to take divorce from her husband. In the novel, Sahgal reveals the psychological, financial and other existential problems which a woman has to face as part of her punishment for leaving her husband. Through Simrit's divorce, Sahgal thus makes a strong plea for a change and revitalization of the Indian society. Sahgal's concept of emancipation reaches its culmination duly and justly in her novel *Mistaken Identity* (1988). In the novel, we meet a woman who is out and out a rebel. The Rane of Vijaygarh defies all moulds and definitions. She is a class apart. She breaks all boundaries and makes her own rules. She married at the age of five, brought to her husband's home at thirteen, had to wait for nine long years to be blessed with a son. She belongs to an age when women were expected to stay behind veil. She remains completely detached and isolated in her family mansion. She faces a very subtle and inhuman form of exploitation. She is uneducated, rather illiterate, has an apathetic husband, has nothing to look forward to, and yet she dares to shun her husband from her life, when she discovers the man has no respect for her kind. There is no one to support her in her crusade against female exploitation and yet she dares to challenge the authority of her husband in his own home.[6] The woman behind the veil breaks all ties with her husband, when he marries for the third time. In fact, her free spirit, her strong will, submitted to the demands of neither her husband nor the world. Her life lacks continuity and warmth, she feels isolated.

She knows nothing about women's liberation, she becomes a strong practitioner of the same because whatever measures she takes to insulate her self-respect from tyrannical forces, she does so without the support of anyone else. When in the end she breaks free from all preventions and marries comrade Yusuf, it is without any infesting sense of guilt that she does so. Her marriage to Yusuf is not an effort to seek refuge from the evils that Raja has subjected to her. Such refuge, she does not ask for. She does not support even from her son Bhushan. She walks her own proud way even when there is no comrade Yusuf in her life. Here, Sahgal shows a steady evolution in the course of her writing career. Rane marks the culmination of the onward march of Sahgal's new woman towards freedom. Both the women novelists portray the image of women in her novels.

They have portrayed a man-woman relationship with different perspectives. Their women characters especially only after they have gone through their own experiences, come to their real self. They also revolt against the traditional image of Indian women in words and deeds, be it in business or sexual spheres. In a sense she is the forerunner of the emerging Indian women with their liberated womanhood. The only difference between both the novelists is that Shobha De is renowned for bold and frank style of writing. Shobha De's women characters are very frank about their expression of sexual desire by snubbing the sexual morality which is essentially ordained for women in the patriarchal system existing in India. Her novels represent the new Indian woman's voice. A 'New Woman' is in search of self-identity, seeking liberation in all walks of life, she is no way seems to support the way of life adopted by these so called modern women. On

the contrary, she shows her contempt and dislike for their unethical and socially unacceptable behavior. This can be deduced from the ultimate activities and deviant behavior. In fact Shobha De advises her women to analyze their behavior and stop posing to be men. In the present scenario of gender discrimination, a study of her novels helps to widen and direct our thoughts to relevant problems affecting women in Indian society. On the other hand, Nayantara Sahgal is one of the important women novelists who depicts post-colonial attitudes and vouches for a new feminine morality and a new humanism in her novels. As a woman novelist, Sahgal recognizes that her primary obligation is that advocating the emancipation of women. She describes how woman is exploited even during the modern times by both the individuals and the society. She also traces out a slow and gradual deviation from the stereotype of the virtuous woman to redefine virtue. She condemns self-immolation and suffering and points out that the virtue of the modern woman is “courage which is a willingness to risk the unknown and to face the consequences.” In short, Sahgal’s women are of the view that they should move with the time and they should not compromise with the issue of their individual freedom in our male-dominated society. The feminist in Sahgal always insists on women’s equality at par with men. Key words: - Feminism, Self-realization, Indian women, New Woman Indian Literature in English has journeyed a long way to achieve its present glory and grandeur. At present a number of women writers through their writings offer penetrative insight into the complex issues of life. The fictional concerns of these women writers analyze the world of women, their sufferings as victims of male hegemony; they also express social, economic and political upheavals in Indian society. [7] Among these women writers Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal has earned a separate space for their particular attention towards psychological insight and existential concerns. These new generation of writers talked about the self-realization of women. The high class, educated, sensible women became protagonist in their novels. Their women were new class of women whose lives were not infested by problems of dowry or poverty. These Indian women lived a blessed life as far as material standards are concerned, but there was something wanting, some vacuum in their lives. These women were facing the problem of identity. They show concern about basic human problems and to them woman is a mother, a wife, a daughter, a housewife, a working woman and above all she is a woman. Their women are the victims of a male-dominated society. In their novels men are not always sinners or oppressors. They explore the identity of the oppressor and show a holistic approach to the problems of women through their novels. They have raised woman’s issues and strove to reach to their solutions as well. An attempt has been made through this paper about the status of Indian women in the writings of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal in which they represent new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man’s equal and honored partner. Their women characters undoubtedly reveal their feminist ideology. The paper seeks to provide a comparative study of the image of woman in the novels of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal. Shobha De graduated from St. Xavier’s College Mumbai, has been: a super model, celebrity journalist, magazine editor, columnist, wife, mother, social commentator and T.V. scriptwriter. She projects the image of the upper-class woman in contemporary India.

She has an extraordinary ability to discuss the very sensitive aspects of human relationship in general and man-woman relationship in particular. She believes in a very frank narration of incidents and openheartedness. Nothing is reserved in her fiction. It is in this respect Shobha De differs considerably from other Indian Women Novelists in English. In her novels more emphasis is on the image of woman.[8]

It is revealed in the form of her critical comments on the new emerging woman of modern cosmopolitan India. She portrays a variety of women from the traditional, subjugated and marginalized to the extremely modern and liberated women. She explored the lives of bored housewives and their loveless rich husbands and family. Her novels mirror the life styles of the elite and the middle classes of urban world. Her style of discussing

woman's issue in her novels is quite challenging and untraditional. Women in her novels are represented as sexually liberated and free thinkers who have been termed as 'New Woman'. These so called new women are much more physically active and athletically strong than their mothers. Feminist New Style, a journal (1927) declared that "The new woman is a blend of physical freedom, sexuality and stamina with feminist self-assertiveness and traditional domestic femininity, a woman who can combine pleasure, career and marriage.

They are eager to participate in pleasure as they would do in play, work etc." All her women are rebellious modern Indian women who challenge the orthodoxy of social taboos. They are different from the sexually ignorant Indian women, who feel that sex is as unpleasant subjection to man's desire necessary in order to have offspring. Her women challenge this traditional set up in the society. They are more assertive, domineering and bold in comparison to men. They are not submissive and guilty of their affairs. The women in Shobha De's novels rebuild their lost fortunes; make all efforts to look glamorous by losing weight and spending money in massage parlours. They try to look and act differently from the conventional and traditional women. They love to fall in love with their looks by which they try to attract people. It gives them immense pleasure when people fall head to heels in love with them and they are least concerned about it. Shobha De does not believe in describing her women characters as love slaves or mere help mates at home, as a writer she tries to mirror her feminist mindset while portraying women in her novels. A broader evaluation of her work reveals her protest against the good old image of woman who can't live the way she wants to and do things the way she wants to. The portrayal of the image of subjugated and marginalized women in Shobha De's novels: *Socialite Evenings* (1989), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Starry Nights* (1992), *Sisters* (1992), have been studied with an emphasis on men's pride, incompatible marriages, traditional norms of behavior and patriarchal social system as the real forces of the oppression and exploitation of women. Her novels are a slice of urban life and presents an intimate side of urban woman's life, also reveals her plight in the present day society. She draws our attention to women's exploitation, discrimination and emancipation. They are treated with double standard and are never regarded as autonomous beings.[9] In *Socialite Evenings* (1989), Karuna, the protagonist of the novel is the perfect example of the misery of women in India. She suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband. Her husband treats her as a mere object subjected to his will as a result there is a complete loss of her identity. The journey of Karuna is a journey from a middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman. Her entry in the glamorous world of modeling and friendship with Bunty are the acts of rebellion. After marriage she establishes extra-marital relationship with Krish, revolts against her insensitive husband and finally divorces him. She also rejects the ideas of her second marriage. Similarly, Anjali, a young socialite, also suffers much because of her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. Here, Shobha De's attack is not against the individuals, it is against the system that favours men and causes women's subjugation and marginalization. In *Starry Nights* (1992), Shobha De has projected the shattering of human values in this glittering world of Mumbai cinema through the realistic portrayal of Aasha Rani, Geeta Devi, Malini and Rita. In our society, women ill-treat and exploit women instead of showing love, respect and understanding for their own sex. As a matter of fact, Shobha De brings out the the universal psychological truth that the woman is the enemy of woman. The women in this novel are related to the world of films. Aasha Rani, 'sweetheart of the millions', breaks all social mores and social norms by her unusual and deviant behavior. Nothing controls her desire to live a life of her own. Her sexual encounters with different men point out her sexual aggression. She defeats men at their own game, and demolishes the mythical image of woman imposed by patriarchy. According to De, 'sex is the bedrock of all relationships'. Her women in this novel frankly discuss and practice sex. They are bold and rebellious who protect against their exploitation and strive to assert their identity. However women in Shobha De's are broad

mindful enough to continue with their flings and affairs without bothering about the matrimonial alliance of their partners. These women are confident and are reasonable enough to justify their relationship. This relationship is best exhibited in the relationship between Asha Rani and Akshay Arora in *Starry Nights*.

Discussion

The concept of morality arising out of love for one and the same person is out-dated. This is well illustrated by Shobha De's *Sisters* (1992). In this novel Mikki Hiralal is oppressed, subjugated and exploited by Binny Malhotra, a true representative of patriarchal system. The protagonist Mikki in her journey from a silent sufferer to a hard rebel breaks all the age-old moral codes of the male-dominated world. She does not appear emotional or sentimental even on the death of her parents like the traditional Indian woman. Both Mikki and Alisha, (another character) are not weak ladies of manners. After Mikki got the sexual satisfaction from her husband before marriage, she immediately got married to him without giving second thoughts to her decision. The modern Indian woman who is at the centre of Shobha De's novels is not passive in nature. She protests strongly against the forces in male-dominated world, which threaten her individuality. Alisha expresses the novelist's desire of liberation for women in sexual matters. Next, a middle-class working woman Taarini asserts her love for Shashi, despite her husband and children. Shobha De's women break all sorts of taboos and feel liberated. The novel *Second Thoughts* (1996) is a sad tale of Maya, an oppressed wife. She suffers from marital disharmony because her husband Ranjan considers woman as a mere object. Though an engineer, Maya is not allowed to take up even a part time job. Instead her husband again and again reminds her of 'tradition'. It is due to Ranjan's traditional attitude and feeling of superiority, Maya feels herself trapped in a neglected and meaningless life. He never tried to find out the reason behind Maya's gloominess. He was under the assumption that providing four square meals was more than enough for her and she ought to be grateful for what he was doing for her. Even when Maya advances to him in bed, he snubbed by saying that he needed time for it. The entry of Nikhil brought a new meaning to Maya's life.[10] He was fourth floor neighbor and was a college going student. He may not be interested in studies but he had mastered the art of captivating women. Maya could immediately feel the difference Nikhil brought to her life. Nikhil filled Maya with the power and pleasure that she was so much desperate about. She had found meaning in her existence in this world. Sometimes Shobha De has been charged of commercializing women while expressing sex in a much elaborated detail. After reading her novels one feels that she has tried to fight for the cause of women and has brought out the aspect of sex because she feels that women are marginalized in terms of sex. They are made slaves in the hands of their husbands by making them satisfy their demands whenever they need it. They get cruel and rude even in love making and get enjoyment out of it. Shobha De has portrayed men deriving pleasure by torturing a woman by beating their naked body with hunters or hurting them with making bruises and giving them pain. Therefore the novelist has portrayed her women in such a way that they are sexually liberated and use sex on their own terms. As a staunch supporter and an ardent follower of feminism there is a bold and frank depiction of fair sex and feminine attitude in her works. Her novels are the protest novels against the male-dominated Indian society where women are denied the freedom of expression and action. Shobha De's novels represent the new Indian woman's voice. A 'New Woman' is in search of self-identity, seeking liberation in all walks of life, replacing the traditional image of Indian woman. The need for women to seek their identity is the message in her novels. Nayantara Sahgal emerged as one of the most significant voices in the realm of Indian English fiction. Women who are conscious of their emotional needs and strive for self-fulfillment rejecting the existing traditions and social set-up and long for a more liberal and unconventional way of life finds their place in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Her novels portray women trampled and oppressed because of their dependence upon men and the harrowing experience they have to

face in their struggle to come out of the bondage and stand on their own feet. The hardship and suffering involved in fighting against an established order, the shattering experience of divorce and the resultant alienation between parents and children form the thematic concern of Sahgal's novels. Sahgal's novels : *A Time to be Happy* (1957), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *Mistaken Identity* (1988) portray the sensibility of woman, how a woman looks out at herself and her problems. She feels that woman should try to understand and realize herself as a human being and not just as an appendage to some male life. In her novels women represent different kinds of virtues. They do not suffer but maintain their position. The novels of Sahgal talk about women who are oppressed by marriage, by political circumstances, by accidents of history. Most of her women characters have extra-marital relationship with one or more than one person. Her women are victims of a conventional society which does not permit women to assert their rights pertaining to their individual freedom. Women who feel frustrated either because of marital disharmony or loneliness in life is shown to indulge in social or religious activities. In Sahgal's novel *A Time to be Happy* (1957), Maya is a woman who tries to submerge her unhappiness and dissatisfaction in social work and religion. Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships and the loneliness of living; hence most of her women remarry. [11] Maya is a silent victim at the altar of marriage. Sahgal's women characters suffer because they refuse to submerge their individuality and cling to their personal identity at all costs. Maya suffers because she refuses to lose her identity. Sahgal shows her acute awareness of the dependent status of women in society. *A Time to be Happy* explores women's search for individuality both within marriage as equal partners and without it as individual. The women in *This Time of Morning* (1965) are more varied in their search for freedom and equality. Uma and Leela, in their reckless search for freedom, use men as tools, but succeed only in harming themselves. Celia, Barbara and Nita, in their ultimate dependence on Kalyan betray the failure of their search for identity. In the character of Nita, Sahgal explores the place of a woman in Indian society before marriage. Nita is the young, beautiful daughter of Dr. Narang, who is a queer blend of Eastern and Western culture. Nita's parents want to settle down their daughter in marriage. They do not give any importance to the wishes of her daughter and force her to marry the man of their choice whom she neither loves nor admires. Finally, she agrees to her parents' choice of Vijay as groom. Though she is aware that Vijay views her as a possession not as an individual, and this kind of marriage has no prospects of fulfillment. Nita desires to live her own life and discover the needs of her body, rejecting the values and ideas of the previous generation thrust upon her. She offers herself to the irresistible Kalyan, the man of her choice. Nita's pre-marital relationship with Kalyan is the result of an attempt to fulfill her inner desire for love and communication. When the time comes to decide about her marriage, her parents decide her future. Through the character of Nita, Sahgal shows the conventional narrow-minded Indian society, where life-partners are chosen by the parents. *The Day in Shadow* (1971) primarily deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. It centres on the traumatic post-divorce experience of a middle-aged woman, Simrit. Simrit's marriage to Som, an industrialist, turns out to be disaster. The novel is basically concerned with the emotional effects of Simrit. The central preoccupation of the novel is the suffering caused to woman in the prison- house of love-less marriage and her suffering when she makes a breakway. When the story opens, Simrit and Som are divorced and she is trying to adjust to the aftermath of a divorce. Sahgal deals how lack of proper companionship, communication and equality between man and woman cause wreck to marital relationship resulting in divorce. Simrit suffered from marital incompatibility. Simrit longs for self-expression and freedom to live as an individual within the bonds of marriage. She feels uprooted and abandoned in the male-dominated world as she finds that nobody tries to see divorce from her point of view, as a person seeking freedom and fulfillment.

The novelist seems to be deeply concerned with the need of freedom for women. It is Simrit's longing for freedom and individuality that urges her to take divorce from her husband. In the novel, Sahgal reveals the psychological, financial and other existential problems which a woman has to face as part of her punishment for leaving her husband. Through Simrit's divorce, Sahgal thus makes a strong plea for a change and revitalization of the Indian society. Sahgal's concept of emancipation reaches its culmination duly and justly in her novel *Mistaken Identity* (1988). In the novel, we meet a woman who is out and out a rebel.[12] The Ranee of Vijaygarh defies all moulds and definitions. She is a class apart. She breaks all boundaries and makes her own rules. She married at the age of five, brought to her husband's home at thirteen, had to wait for nine long years to be blessed with a son. She belongs to an age when women were expected to stay behind veil. She remains completely detached and isolated in her family mansion. She faces a very subtle and inhuman form of exploitation. She is uneducated, rather illiterate, has an apathetic husband, has nothing to look forward to, and yet she dares to shun her husband from her life, when she discovers the man has no respect for her kind. There is no one to support her in her crusade against female exploitation and yet she dares to challenge the authority of her husband in his own home. The woman behind the veil breaks all ties with her husband, when he marries for the third time. In fact, her free spirit, her strong will, submitted to the demands of neither her husband nor the world. Her life lacks continuity and warmth, she feels isolated. She knows nothing about women's liberation, she becomes a strong practitioner of the same because whatever measures she takes to insulate her self-respect from tyrannical forces, she does so without the support of anyone else. When in the end she breaks free from all preventions and marries comrade Yusuf, it is without any infesting sense of guilt that she does so. Her marriage to Yusuf is not an effort to seek refuge from the evils that Raja has subjected to her. Such refuge, she does not ask for. She does not support even from her son Bhushan. She walks her own proud way even when there is no comrade Yusuf in her life. Here, Sahgal shows a steady evolution in the course of her writing career. Ranee marks the culmination of the onward march of Sahgal's new woman towards freedom. Both the women novelists portray the image of women in her novels. They have portrayed a man-woman relationship with different perspectives. Their women characters especially only after they have gone through their own experiences, come to their real self. They also revolt against the traditional image of Indian women in words and deeds, be it in business or sexual spheres. In a sense she is the forerunner of the emerging Indian women with their liberated womanhood. The only difference between both the novelists is that Shobha De is renowned for bold and frank style of writing. Shobha De's women characters are very frank about their expression of sexual desire by snubbing the sexual morality which is essentially ordained for women in the patriarchal system existing in India. Her novels represent the new Indian woman's voice. A 'New Woman' is in search of self-identity, seeking liberation in all walks of life, she is no way seems to support the way of life adopted by these so called modern women. On the contrary, she shows her contempt and dislike for their unethical and socially unacceptable behavior.[13] This can be deduced from the ultimate activities and deviant behavior. In fact Shobha De advises her women to analyze their behavior and stop posing to be men. In the present scenario of gender discrimination, a study of her novels helps to widen and direct our thoughts to relevant problems affecting women in Indian society. On the other hand, Nayantara Sahgal is one of the important women novelists who depicts post-colonial attitudes and vouches for a new feminine morality and a new humanism in her novels. As a woman novelist, Sahgal recognizes that her primary obligation is that advocating the emancipation of women. She describes how woman is exploited even during the modern times by both the individuals and the society. She also traces out a slow and gradual deviation from the stereotype of the virtuous woman to redefine virtue. She condemns self-immolation and suffering and points out that the virtue of the modern woman is "courage which is a willingness to risk the unknown and to face the consequences." In short, Sahgal's women are of the view that

they should move with the time and they should not compromise with the issue of their individual freedom in our male-dominated society. The feminist in Sahgal always insists on women's equality at par with men. Indian Literature in English has journeyed a long way to achieve its present glory and grandeur. At present a number of women writers through their writings offer penetrative insight into the complex issues of life. The fictional concerns of these women writers analyze the world of women, their sufferings as victims of male hegemony; they also express social, economic and political upheavals in Indian society. Among these women writers Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal has earned a separate space for their particular attention towards psychological insight and existential concerns. These new generation of writers talked about the self-realization of women. The high class, educated, sensible women became protagonist in their novels. Their women were new class of women whose lives were not infested by problems of dowry or poverty. These Indian women lived a blessed life as far as material standards are concerned, but there was something wanting, some vacuum in their lives. These women were facing the problem of identity. They show concern about basic human problems and to them woman is a mother, a wife, a daughter, a housewife, a working woman and above all she is a woman. Their women are the victims of a male-dominated society. In their novels men are not always sinners or oppressors. [12] They explore the identity of the oppressor and show a holistic approach to the problems of women through their novels. They have raised woman's issues and strove to reach to their solutions as well. An attempt has been made through this paper about the status of Indian women in the writings of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal in which they represent new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man's equal and honored partner. Their women characters undoubtedly reveal their feminist ideology. The paper seeks to provide a comparative study of the image of woman in the novels of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal. Shobha De graduated from St. Xavier's College Mumbai, has been: a super model, celebrity journalist, magazine editor, columnist, wife, mother, social commentator and T.V. scriptwriter. She projects the image of the upper-class woman in contemporary India. She has an extraordinary ability to discuss the very sensitive aspects of human relationship in general and man-woman relationship in particular. She believes in a very frank narration of incidents and openheartedness. Nothing is reserved in her fiction. It is in this respect Shobha De differs considerably from other Indian Women Novelists in English. In her novels more emphasis is on the image of woman. It is revealed in the form of her critical comments on the new emerging woman of modern cosmopolitan India. She portrays a variety of women from the traditional, subjugated and marginalized to the extremely modern and liberated women. She explored the lives of bored housewives and their loveless rich husbands and family. Her novels mirror the life styles of the elite and the middle classes of urban world. Her style of discussing woman's issue in her novels is quite challenging and untraditional. Women in her novels are represented as sexually liberated and free thinkers who have been termed as 'New Woman'. These so called new women are much more physically active and athletically strong than their mothers. Feminist New Style, a journal (1927) declared that "The new woman is a blend of physical freedom, sexuality and stamina with feminist self-assertiveness and traditional domestic femininity, a woman who can combine pleasure, career and marriage. They are eager to participate in pleasure as they would do in play, work etc." All her women are rebellious modern Indian women who challenge the orthodoxy of social taboos. They are different from the sexually ignorant Indian women, who feel that sex is as unpleasant subjection to man's desire necessary in order to have offspring. Her women challenge this traditional set up in the society. They are more assertive, domineering and bold in comparison to men. They are not submissive and guilty of their affairs. [11]

Results

The women in Shobha De's novels rebuild their lost fortunes; make all efforts to look glamorous by losing weight and spending money in massage parlours. They try to look and act differently from the conventional and traditional women. They love to fall in love with their looks by which they try to attract people. It gives them immense pleasure when people fall head to heels in love with them and they are least concerned about it. Shobha De does not believe in describing her women characters as love slaves or mere help mates at home, as a writer she tries to mirror her feminist mindset while portraying women in her novels. A broader evaluation of her work reveals her protest against the good old image of woman who can't live the way she wants to and do things the way she wants to. The portrayal of the image of subjugated and marginalized women in Shobha De's novels: *Socialite Evenings* (1989), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Starry Nights* (1992), *Sisters* (1992), have been studied with an emphasis on men's pride, incompatible marriages, traditional norms of behavior and patriarchal social system as the real forces of the oppression and exploitation of women. Her novels are a slice of urban life and presents an intimate side of urban woman's life, also reveals her plight in the present day society. She draws our attention to women's exploitation, discrimination and emancipation. They are treated with double standard and are never regarded as autonomous beings. In *Socialite Evenings* (1989), Karuna, the protagonist of the novel is the perfect example of the misery of women in India. She suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband.[10] Her husband treats her as a mere object subjected to his will as a result there is a complete loss of her identity. The journey of Karuna is a journey from a middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman. Her entry in the glamorous world of modeling and friendship with Bunty are the acts of rebellion. After marriage she establishes extra-marital relationship with Krish, revolts against her insensitive husband and finally divorces him. She also rejects the ideas of her second marriage. Similarly, Anjali, a young socialite, also suffers much because of her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. Here, Shobha De's attack is not against the individuals, it is against the system that favours men and causes women's subjugation and marginalization. In *Starry Nights* (1992), Shobha De has projected the shattering of human values in this glittering world of Mumbai cinema through the realistic portrayal of Aasha Rani, Geeta Devi, Malini and Rita. In our society, women ill-treat and exploit women instead of showing love, respect and understanding for their own sex. As a matter of fact, Shobha De brings out the the universal psychological truth that the woman is the enemy of woman. The women in this novel are related to the world of films. Aasha Rani, 'sweetheart of the millions', breaks all social mores and social norms by her unusual and deviant behavior. Nothing controls her desire to live a life of her own. Her sexual encounters with different men point out her sexual aggression. She defeats men at their own game, and demolishes the mythical image of woman imposed by patriarchy. According to De, 'sex is the bedrock of all relationships'. Her women in this novel frankly discuss and practice sex. They are bold and rebellious who protect against their exploitation and strive to assert their identity. However women in Shobha De's are broad minded enough to continue with their flings and affairs without bothering about the matrimonial alliance of their partners. These women are confident and are reasonable enough to justify their relationship. This relationship is best exhibited in the relationship between Aasha Rani and Akshay Arora in *Starry Nights*. The concept of morality arising out of love for one and the same person is out-dated. This is well illustrated by Shobha De's *Sisters* (1992).[9] In this novel Mikki Hiralal is oppressed, subjugated and exploited by Binny Malhotra, a true representative of patriarchal system. The protagonist Mikki in her journey from a silent sufferer to a hard rebel, breaks all the age-old moral codes of the male-dominated world. She does not appear emotional or sentimental even on the death of her parents like the traditional Indian woman. Both Mikki and Alisha, (another character) are not weal ladies of manners. After Mikki got the sexual satisfaction from her husband before marriage, she immediately got married to him without giving second thoughts to her decision. The modern Indian woman who is at the centre of Shobha De's novels is not passive in nature. She protests

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work and religion. Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships and the loneliness of living; hence most of her women remarry. Maya is a silent victim at the altar of marriage. Sahgal's women characters suffer because they refuse to submerge their individuality and cling to their personal identity at all costs. Maya suffers because she refuses to lose her identity. Sahgal shows her acute awareness of the dependent status of women in society. *A Time to be Happy* explores women's search for individuality both within marriage as equal partners and without it as individual. The women in *This Time of Morning* (1965) are more varied in their search for freedom and equality. Uma and Leela, in their reckless search for freedom, use men as tools, but succeed only in harming themselves. Celia, Barbara and Nita, in their ultimate dependence on Kalyan betray the failure of their search for identity. In the character of Nita, Sahgal explores the place of a woman in Indian society before marriage. Nita is the young, beautiful daughter of Dr. Narang, who is a queer blend of Eastern and Western culture. Nita's parents want to settle down their daughter in marriage.[6] They do not give any importance to the wishes of her daughter and force her to marry the man of their choice whom she neither loves nor admires. Finally, she agrees to her parents' choice of Vijay as groom. Though she is aware that Vijay views her as a possession not as an individual, and this kind of marriage has no prospects of fulfillment. Nita desires to live her own life and discover the needs of her body, rejecting the values and ideas of the previous generation thrust upon her. She offers herself to the irresistible Kalyan, the man of her choice. Nita's pre-marital relationship with Kalyan is the result of an attempt to fulfill her inner desire for love and communication. When the time comes to decide about her marriage, her parents decide her future. Through the character of Nita, Sahgal shows the conventional narrow-minded Indian society, where life-partners are chosen by the parents. *The Day in Shadow* (1971) primarily deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. It centres on the traumatic post-divorce experience of a middle-aged woman, Simrit. Simrit's marriage to Som, an industrialist, turns out to be disaster. The novel is basically concerned with the emotional effects of Simrit. The central preoccupation of the novel is the suffering caused to woman in the prison- house of love-less marriage and her suffering when she makes a breakway. When the story opens, Simrit and Som are divorced and she is trying to adjust to the aftermath of a divorce. Sahgal deals how lack of proper companionship, communication and equality between man and woman cause wreck to marital relationship resulting in divorce. Simrit suffered from marital incompatibility. Simrit longs for self-expression and freedom to live as an individual within the bonds of marriage. She feels uprooted and abandoned in the male-dominated world as she finds that nobody tries to see divorce from her point of view, as a person seeking freedom and fulfillment.

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respect for her kind. There is no one to support her in her crusade against female exploitation and yet she dares to challenge the authority of her husband in his own home. The woman behind the veil breaks all ties with her husband, when he marries for the third time. In fact, her free spirit, her strong will, submitted to the demands of neither her husband nor the world. Her life lacks continuity and warmth, she feels isolated. She knows nothing about women's liberation, she becomes a strong practitioner of the same because whatever measures she takes to insulate her self-respect from tyrannical forces, she does so without the support of anyone else. When in the end she breaks free from all preventions and marries comrade Yusuf, it is without any infesting sense of guilt that she does so. Her marriage to Yusuf is not an effort to seek refuge from the evils that Raja has subjected to her. Such refuge, she does not ask for. She does not support even from her son Bhushan. She walks her own proud way even when there is no comrade Yusuf in her life. Here, Sahgal shows a steady evolution in the course of her writing career. Raneer marks the culmination of the onward march of Sahgal's new woman towards freedom. Both the women novelists portray the image of women in her novels. They have portrayed a man-woman relationship with different perspectives. Their women characters especially only after they have gone through their own experiences, come to their real self. They also revolt against the traditional image of Indian women in words and deeds, be it in business or sexual spheres. In a sense she is the forerunner of the emerging Indian women with their liberated womanhood. The only difference between both the novelists is that Shobha De is renowned for bold and frank style of writing.

Shobha De's women characters are very frank about their expression of sexual desire by snubbing the sexual morality which is essentially ordained for women in the patriarchal system existing in India. Her novels represent the new Indian woman's voice. [4]

Conclusion

A 'New Woman' is in search of self-identity, seeking liberation in all walks of life, she in no way seems to support the way of life adopted by these so called modern women. On the contrary, she shows her contempt and dislike for their unethical and socially unacceptable behavior. This can be deduced from the ultimate activities and deviant behavior. In fact Shobha De advises her women to analyze their behavior and stop posing to be men. In the present scenario of gender discrimination, a study of her novels helps to widen and direct our thoughts to relevant problems affecting women in Indian society. On the other hand, Nayantara Sahgal is one of the important women novelists who depicts post-colonial attitudes and vouches for a new feminine morality and a new humanism in her novels. As a woman novelist, Sahgal recognizes that her primary obligation is that advocating the emancipation of women. She describes how woman is exploited even during the modern times by both the individuals and the society. [11] She also traces out a slow and gradual deviation from the stereotype of the virtuous woman to redefine virtue. She condemns self-immolation and suffering and points out that the virtue of the modern woman is "courage which is a willingness to risk the unknown and to face the consequences." In short, Sahgal's women are of the view that they should move with the time and they should not compromise with the issue of their individual freedom in our male-dominated society. The feminist in Sahgal always insists on women's equality at par with men. Key words:- Feminism, Self-realization, Indian women, New Woman Indian Literature in English has journeyed a long way to achieve its present glory and grandeur. At present a number of women writers through their writings offer penetrative insight into the complex issues of life. The fictional concerns of these women writers analyze the world of women, their sufferings as victims of male hegemony; they also express social, economic and political upheavals in Indian society. Among these women writers Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal has earned a separate space for their particular attention towards psychological insight and existential

concerns. These new generation of writers talked about the self-realization of women. The high class, educated, sensible women became protagonist in their novels. Their women were new class of women whose lives were not infested by problems of dowry or poverty. These Indian women lived a blessed life as far as material standards are concerned, but there was something wanting, some vacuum in their lives. These women were facing the problem of identity. They show concern about basic human problems and to them woman is a mother, a wife, a daughter, a housewife, a working woman and above all she is a woman. [12] Their women are the victims of a male-dominated society. In their novels men are not always sinners or oppressors. They explore the identity of the oppressor and show a holistic approach to the problems of women through their novels. They have raised woman's issues and strove to reach to their solutions as well. An attempt has been made through this paper about the status of Indian women in the writings of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal in which they represent new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man's equal and honored partner. Their women characters undoubtedly reveal their feminist ideology. The paper seeks to provide a comparative study of the image of woman in the novels of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal.[13]

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